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ABSTRACT

Materials developed for a World Wide Web class, used in the regular classroom, improved classroom delivery significantly. A combination of Web material and classroom lecture may be the ideal combination for some subjects. This paper shows how some of the Web tools can be used to the teacher's advantage in the regular classroom. University support is vital for Web development, and the paper also looks at training needs for faculty to offer Web-assisted courses. Online grade information and bulletin boards are generally used with Web courses, and faculty need training in incorporating these tools in their Web-assisted courses. (Author/MES)

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Enhancing Classroom Teaching with Online Web-Based Tools

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Abstract

Materials developed for a web class, used in the regular classroom, improved classroom delivery significantly. A combination of web material and classroom lecture may be the ideal combination for some subjects. We will show how some of the web tools can be used to your advantage in the regular classroom.

University support is vital for web development. We will look at training needs for faculty to offer web-assisted courses. Online grade information, and bulletin boards are generally used with web courses and faculty need training in incorporating these tools in their web-assisted courses.

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I. Introduction

With the widespread use and the rapid growth of the Internet, educational and training institutions around the globe are racing towards using the Internet as a new medium of delivering information. The world-wide-web is a powerful and exciting medium for communication and as such is a valuable resource for faculty for delivering online information. Its ease of use and the capacity as a repository of information and the interactive delivery of content makes it an effective option for furthering knowledge and skill. The advantage of web-assisted content is that they can easily be reviewed and changed for currency and accuracy compared to textbooks. As the world-wide-web becomes a state-of-the art delivery medium there is a need among educators and trainers to obtain knowledge about the tools needed for developing and implementing web-assisted courses.

II. Design of Web Pages

The web material developers must provide the following information in their web-assisted courses: A header identifying the author and course details, E-mail access to the web material author along with other means of access, information on last revision and date, appropriate citations for text, graphics, video, and audio sources that are not created by the web course author, a link to the University Home Page, a copyright statement, and text elements that can be read while the media are loading1. Some general guidelines2 to follow are: Split your information into logical sections, make sure your starting page is attractive and well laid out, try to have a consistent theme throughout your entire site, try to use colors, styles, and fonts that complement each other.

Try to get to the point on the first page, or at least give people an idea of what your site is about. Make it easy for the viewer to find the information for which they are looking. Ask yourself what things people might be looking for and try to make those things accessible from the main page. Offer a way of contacting somebody in case they don't find what they are looking for. Try to test your pages to see how they look with a different size screen, with the images turned off, a different color resolution, and a different browser. Make sure your site is relatively quick to load, no matter what you put on it. As a rule the page should not be more than 50K. Under normal conditions, this page will load in a few seconds yet allow some fairly good use of graphics. If you have more material, consider separating it on separate pages. Graphics can be stored in a

JPEG or GIF format. JPEG format uses "lossy" compression and you can decide the trade off between file size and qual
ity. GIF images will ensure that the images display exactly the same all the time. Use graphics and gadgets sparingly. Some common things that get overused are excessive graphics and background images2.

III. Web Content

The front end of your web page should include a welcome screen, syllabus, testing information, posting of grades online, and a bulletin board. There are many different web page editors available in the market today that can be used in order to quickly create a functional Web page. Microsoft FrontPage 2000 is relatively easy to use considering our University's familiarity with the Microsoft Office suite. FrontPage 2000 allows you to create Web pages using one of the pre-developed program templates and from blank pages.

Creating Web pages in Microsoft FrontPage is very easy1. Launch FrontPage, select File in the menu bar, select New from the drop down menu, select web from the sub menu, select One Page Web icon from the new dialog box, specify the location of your Web account, and click on the OK button. When you begin using FrontPage you will find that many of the toolbar buttons are the same as the toolbar buttons found in Microsoft Office.

To create a new web page after launching FrontPage, select File from the menu bar, select New from the drop down menu, select Page from the submenu, select the general tab, select the Normal Page template, and click on the OK button. To update a Web page after launching FrontPage, select File from the menu bar, select Open Web from the drop down menu, select the web from the Look In Listing, and click on the Open button. Open the Web page that you wish to edit on your computer in FrontPage by selecting File from the menu bar, select Open from the drop down menu, select File from the listing, and click on the Open button. Your Web page should now be open and ready to edit. The standard toolbar provides many of the same functions that you will find in Microsoft Word.

To insert tables, position your cursor where you would like your table inserted. From the drop down table select the number of rows and columns you would like to have in your table. Click this button to insert a table. This can be used to present information in a tabular format. To make a link select the text that you want linked. Click the link button to create a link to another page. FrontPage has several themes that are ready for you to apply to your Web page or entire site. This is similar to PowerPoint themes. To apply a theme select Format from the menu bar, select Themes from the drop down menu, select the theme that you wish to apply, and click on Ok button to apply the changes. To modify themes, select Format in the Menu bar, select Themes from the drop down menu, select the theme you wish to modify, click on the Modify button to see additional buttons such as Colors, Graphics, and Text. In order for viewers to contact you with questions or comments, you want to create an e-mail link. To do this

insert a text or graphic that you want to serve as E-mail link and then highlight it. Click on the hyperlink button. Click on the Make a hyperlink that sends E-mail button. Type your E-mail address in the textbox and click on the OK button. To insert graphics, select the Insert Picture from File button from the Standard toolbar, select the graphics that you wish to
add, and click on the Ok button to insert the graphic. Resize the graphic, as needed using the sizing handles. To add a Text Alternative Representation you can click your right mouse button on the inserted graphic and choose Picture Properties. Click Ok button once you have added a brief description of what the picture represents. To save a graphic off the Web that is not copyrighted, click your right mouse button when your mouse is on the picture, point to Save this Image as or Save Image, and in the File Name text box insert your own filename, make sure the proper drive is selected from the Save In list box, make sure the proper subdirectory is selected, and click the Ok button to save the file.

To save Microsoft Word/Excel/PowerPoint 2000 Files as Web Pages, save your file by going to File in the menu Bar, select Save as Web Page from the drop down menu, select your working web page folder to save the file, make sure the file name textbox contains the proper name, and click on the Save button.

IV. Using Web Tools in the Classroom

We have both taught web courses for the past two years. We see the advantages of using web tools in our regular classroom teaching. In fact after teaching one course on the web for the first time, one of the authors realized that the course was not suited to be taught on the web. However the material that had been developed for the web course was ideally suited for use in the classroom3. It improved the classroom course delivery significantly. Also tools such as grade reporting on the web can make the teachers work a lot easier, because you do not have students coming to your office asking for the grades. They can view them online anytime and from anywhere. The course syllabus, power-point presentations, and other class handouts can also be put online4. Again the advantage of putting course material online is that it is available to the student at any time.

V. University Support for Web Courses

The Center for Scholarship in Teaching and Learning (CSTL) at Southeast Missouri State University helps enhance professors' teaching and students' learning experiences by providing a diverse source of materials on effective teaching, and incorporating technology into education as is done at other universities5. The home page, which includes the syllabus for each of the classes, bulletin board for students to discuss topics with each other, and online grade information for the students' benefit, were all made with the help of the CSTL. Students are happy to have the means to communicate with each other5 as is provided by the bulletin board program.

The School of Extended Learning at Southeast Missouri State University is offering incentives for faculty teaching on-line courses, as are many other universities6. The

incentives include a small monetary reward or a reduction in the teaching load during the semester we first teach the course.

VI. Conclusion

In today's competitive industrial environment keeping abreast with emerging Internet technologies and learning/training needs is becoming increasingly important not only for students but also to those involved with education. The internet has become an effective delivery medium for providing easy access to education and training needs, as well as facilitating asynchronous learning. Having a good understanding of the tools needed for developing and implementing course material on the Internet is imperative.

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